

and south appears to have been always carefully observed. The first arrival in Transbaikalia, after the long winter of 1856, were the Siberian Daw (*Corvus* [*Monedula*] *dauricus*) on the 6th of March, and the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*); after which appeared *Syrnhaptés paradoxus*, already in pairs, *Falco tinnunculus*, *Falco æsalon*, *Accentor montanellus*, &c. On the 30th April the first Swallow appeared; but the *Syrnhaptés* had at that period already commenced to hatch its eggs. Those who wish to become acquainted with the proceedings of many of the rarer European species should not fail to make themselves acquainted with Herr Radde's interesting narrative of his exploration of these little-known countries.

5. AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS.

We cannot expect much from our ornithological brethren on the other side of the Atlantic while the present deplorable struggle between the North and South continues, but our readers will be glad to hear that Prof. Baird seems to pursue his even course at the 'Smithsonian,' in spite of the din that must be resounding in his ears at Washington, and that his letters show no symptoms of any disposition to quit the paths of science. The only contribution to our branch of zoology we have to notice since we last addressed our readers on "American publications," is the continuation of Mr. Elliot's 'Monograph of the Pittas,' of which two additional numbers are now ready.

XLVI.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters:—

A l'Editeur de 'l'Ibis.'

Adoa en Abyssinie, 30 Nov. 1861.

MONSIEUR,—Me voila une autre fois en route d'exploration en Afrique. Parti au mois de Mai de Souez par la voie de Djeddah, je me suis rendu d'abord dans l'archipel de Dahalak, près de Massowa, où nous avons pu recueillir beaucoup d'objets ornithologiques, mais, excepté des différentes espèces des œufs (*Larus crassirostris*, *Phaëton æthereus*, *Ardea brevipes*, *A. schis-*

tacea, *Acrocephalus stentorius*, &c.), rien de nouveau pour moi. Au mois de Juillet nous partâmes ensuite dans le pays des Bogos, situé entre l'Abyssinie et Souakim, et nous passâmes la saison des pluies. C'est un plateau de 1000 pieds d'élévation, arrosé par un torrent très considérable—l'*Ain saba* des indigènes—avec un climat assez sain, et plein de végétation magnifique. Le fauna y est rapproché de celui d'Abyssinie, mais j'ai eu le bonheur d'y ramasser bien des choses intéressantes, surtout dans les genres de Faucons, des Hirondinacées, et quelques *Sylvia* et *Fringillæ* qui me paraissent inconnus jusqu'au présent. Pour le moment il me manque le temps de vous en donner des renseignements plus détaillés. Dans le commencement de ce mois-ci je me suis rendu par les provinces septentrionales d'Abyssinie, le Flamesen et le Seraui, en Tigré, après avoir passé le fameux fleuve Mareb, et après quelques visites des pays bas du Barca, vers la province du Taka. Je pense de partir bientôt d'ici vers le Takasseh et les montagnes de Semen et le sud d'Abyssinie. De l'intérieur d'Afrique je ne me manquerais pas de vous donner un petit rapport sur mes travaux et mes découverts.

Votre tout dévoué, etc.,

FREIHERR TH. DE HEUGLIN.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

SIR,—I send a few notes on the nidification of *Cuculus canorus*. Though I have taken many eggs of this species, yet I am not at present a convert to the new theory that the colour varies according to the nest selected. The variation, I believe, arises from the same causes as in many other sorts of eggs: take *Anthus arboreus* or *Sylvia atricapilla* for instance. My experience, however, is chiefly confined to the nests of *S. arundinacea* and *S. phragmitis*. The following are the dates of Cuckoo's eggs which came under my observation this season:—

May 5, in nest of *Fringilla chloris*, which contained a fresh Cuckoo's egg only, yet the Greenfinch flew off the nest.

May 22, in *Sylvia phragmitis*, with three eggs, all fresh.

May 28, in *Sylvia arundinacea*, and four eggs, incubated.

June 3, in *Sylvia phragmitis*, and two eggs, fresh.

June 9, in *Sylvia arundinacea*, and two eggs, fresh.

June 30, in *Sylvia phragmitis*, and two eggs, incubated.

All these were found in the same locality, and the last five within a quarter of a mile, or rather less, of each other; the time extends nearly over May and June. A curious circumstance occasioned the loss of the specimen found May 22. It was near an island, in a situation where no person or quadruped could possibly reach it, not even a rat. The keeper who found it lifted out the Cuckoo's egg, replaced it with care, and, according to usual custom, came to fetch me. He was absent about half an hour; when he returned, we found that the *S. phragmitis*, owner of the nest, had turned out the intruding Cuckoo's egg, and in so doing had broken it, as its own eggs were splashed with the yelk. This circumstance, I have strong reason to believe, became known to the Cuckoo, who, six days after, laid another egg not far off. The last egg (June 30) showed much less colour than the previous one, indicating a later deposit of the bird.

My friend Mr. Alfred Newton has, at the Zoological Society's meeting, April 8, 1862, investigated the subject of the hen *Fringilla incerta*, taken near Brighton, March 13 last. I will, therefore, only add, that a previous cock of great beauty, belonging to Mr. Swaysland, Brighton, was recorded by me in 'The Ibis,' April 1860, p. 201; and that though these are the only two I have myself seen, yet several others are said to have been obtained by Mr. Swaysland near Brighton, but were not much noticed at the time, and no record kept of them.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

GEO. DAWSON ROWLEY.

5, Peel Terrace, Brighton, August 27, 1862.

Mr. Blyth, in a letter dated Calcutta, May 8 last, sends us the following notes relating to No. 13 of 'The Ibis':—

P. 19. *Pratincola leucura*, nobis, was lately obtained abundantly by Dr. Jerdon in the vicinity of Caragola, on the main stream of the Ganges; also *Ruticilla burnesii*, nobis, *Locustella naevia*, and a

new Saxicoline form (*Rhodophila melanoleuca*, Jerdon). This is not much unlike *Pratincola ferrea* of Hodgson in structure, but in habit very different from the *Pratincolæ*, as it keeps to the interior, and not to the tops, of the wild-rose bushes (*Rosa involucrata*) so abundant in all that region. It is of a shining black above, and pure white below. The young of *Pratincola leucura*, in their speckled nestling plumage, were observed in plenty; whereas the species common about Calcutta, *Pr. indica*, nobis, is certainly a migrant. Mr. Hodgson terms this species *Pr. saturator*, which expresses the reverse of its distinction in colouring from *P. rubicola* of Europe. From the latter, however, I may remark, it differs much in its note. Dr. Jerdon also obtained there the true *Caprimulgus mahrattensis*, Sykes (to which my *C. arenarius* from Scinde must be referred), a bird not previously met with in Bengal.

P. 36. Not only is *Haliaëtus leucogaster* a noted robber of the Osprey, but also *H. fulvivent* (v. *macei*) not unfrequently does the same act.

P. 55. *Phylloscopus nitidus*, nobis (*Musicapa nitida*? Latham), is as totally distinct as any species can be from the *Motacilla proregulus* of Pallas. Why should *Phyllobasileus* (1851-2?) take precedence of my *Reguloides* (1847?).

I now refer to this group the following species:—

1. *R. pulchra* (*Abornis pulcher* et *abrochroa*, Hodgson), S.E. Himalaya.

2. *R. trochiloides* (*Acanthiza trochiloides*, Sundevall; *Phyllopneuste reguloides*, nobis), N. India generally, also Burmah.

3. *R. viridipennis*, nobis, Sikkim and Burmah.

4. *R. superciliosa* (Gmelin), (*proregulus* of Pallas).

5. *R. chloronotus* (Hodgson), Himalaya and China.

Ph. nitidus, nobis, belongs to my restricted genus *Phylloscopus*.

N.B. *Sylvia javanica*, Horsf., is referred to *Zosterops* in the India House Catalogue (*vide antea*, pp. 66, 69).

P. 83. I consider *Aquila bifasciata* to be a phase of plumage of *A. imperialis*. *A. fulvescens* of India is distinct from *A. nævioides* of Africa, which is larger and more robust; *A. hastata* is also a good species. I presume that *A. bellicosa* of Africa is identified with *A. bonellii*, and *A. morphnoides* of Australia with

A. pennata. This bird, in India, has always a rudimentary crest. I obtained it near Moulmein. But I do not approve of classing the former in *Hieraëtus*.

P. 91. For *Francolinus perlatus* read, "the *Perdix oculea* of Hardwicke's illustrations." The common Pegu Francolin (*Fr. phayrii*, nobis) I consider to be distinct from *F. perlatus* of China (and now of Mauritius). It is less stout, and the male has more developed spurs; but the two are very similar in plumage.

P. 92. *Falco sacer* proves to be not uncommon in the extreme N.W. of India, in the Sulimani range, &c. This, with *F. cherrug*, *F. lanarius*, &c., are emphatically desert Falcons, as the *Hierofalcones* are Arctic, and the Peregrine group might be termed cliff Falcons. To these desert Falcons Gould's *Hieracideæ* (the adult and young of apparently the same species figured as different) approximate nearly; and surely, also, those antipodal species that have been ranged in *Hierofalco*.

P. 93. I now think that *Oriolus indicus* and *O. chinensis* are the same, but I want better Chinese specimens to judge from. I obtained both *O. indicus* and *O. tenuirostris* at Moulmein, but the female only of the latter, which is very similar to the female of *O. indicus*, excepting in the head and the form of the bill. The female of *O. tenuirostris* is still a desideratum.

The following notes are extracted from Mr. Blyth's more recent letters:—

"Two distinct races of Cuckoos have been confounded under the name *Cuculus striatus*, Drapiez, but were distinguished long ago in the 'Madras Journal' by Lord Arthur Hay,—a larger and a smaller species. The former is *C. striatus*, Drapiez, from Java; and we have it, identically the same, from Malacca and from Mussoree. It is *C. affinis*, A. Hay. The latter is *C. micropterus*, Gould. This I have never seen from the Malayan region, but it is common in Burmah during the rains. I obtained there also, in the cold season (at Moulmein), the young of *Cuculus canorus*; and *C. himalayanus* in Upper Martaban.

"Gould gives *Strix flammea* in his list of birds from near Bankok (P.Z.S. 1859, p. 151). He must mean *S. javanica*, which

is as common in Burmah as it is in India. Yarrell and others extend the range of *S. flammea* to South Africa; but a Cape specimen we have is certainly distinct, and is *Strix affinis*, nobis (*Strix flammea* apud nos, J. A. S. xxix. 100). It is rather larger than *Strix flammea*, with the general colouring much deeper, the back being of a more prevalent and darker ashy, the lower parts more strongly fulvous, and especially the primaries and tail much more broadly and distinctly banded, the dark markings being greatly more developed than even in the true *S. flammea* of Europe and N. Africa. Closed wing $11\frac{3}{4}$ in.; tail $5\frac{1}{8}$; shank (anteriorly) 2 in. A third African species is *Strix pöensis*, Fraser (P.Z.S. 1842, p. 189). The *Strix capensis*, A. Smith, is a *Scelostrix*, Kaup (v. *Glaux*, nobis, preoccupied in botany).

“Jerdon and myself have just been critically examining a number of Shrikes of the *superciliosus* type. There are four recognizable races, viz. *L. superciliosus* (verus), from the Malayan peninsula; *L. phœnicurus*, Pallas, of India, &c.; *L. lucionensis*, Scop., of the Philippines, China, Ceylon, and the Andaman Islands; and *L. arenarius*, nobis, from the desert region of N.W. India. Of these the third has rather a deeper bill than the others: the second I observed at Akyab during the cold season as abundantly as in Lower Bengal; but to the south (as about Moulmein especially) it is replaced by *L. hypoleucos*, nobis, which Gould gives also from Siam, having exactly the same harsh chattering note and habits. Once only I observed *L. hypoleucos* during my month's stay in the *Yunzalia* forests of Upper Martaban. These are the only two Shrikes that I observed in Burmah. A very common bird on the Moulmein hills is the beautiful *Crypsirhina varians*; and *Dendrocitta rufa* is also abundant there. But the most characteristic bird of those hills is *Garrulax belangeri*.

“While writing the above, I have been interested in listening to the song-notes issuing from a cage containing three pairs of the Malayan *Loriculus pumilus*. These are the nearest approach to a proper song that I know of among the *Psittacidae*—far more so even than the pleasing twittering and chirruping of the *Melopsittacus undulatus* of Australia. As a rule among the Parrots, the larger the species the harsher and more discordant are the

natural notes, from the huge Maccaws of South America and greater Cockatoos of the grand Australian region, down to the diminutive species of *Agapornis*, *Psittacula*, *Loriculus*, *Melopittacus*, &c. My Andaman *Kittacincla albiventris* is also now pouring forth his quaint and deep-toned (though rather monotonous) whistling, as unlike the richly varied song of *K. macrourus* as can well be imagined."

"In a recent article in the 'Atlantic Monthly Magazine,' entitled 'Then and Now in the Old Dominion,' there are some interesting notices of the early settlements in Virginia; and the author remarks, incidentally, 'On one occasion the writer, walking through one of these fields, startled an English Lark, which rose singing and soaring skyward. It sang a theme of the olden time. Governor Spottiswood brought with him, when he came, a number of these Larks, and made strenuous efforts to domesticate them in the neighbourhood of Fredericksburg, Virginia. He did not succeed. Now and then we have heard of one being seen companionless. It is a sad symbol of the nobler being who tried to domesticate himself in Virginia—the fine old English gentleman. He is now seen but little oftener than the silver grass and the Lark which he brought with him.' But the Larks could not all of them have been companionless, if their posterity continues to exist to the present time. The late M. Audubon told me one day, in the course of conversation, that he had turned out many British Skylarks in the (then) United States, but that he had not heard of their multiplying. I am aware that the Skylark is one of those European birds that have been obtained in the Bermudas; but there it was probably a straggler from the opposite side of the Atlantic."

"Lieut. Beavan (of the late 63rd B.N.I.) has just returned here from Darjeeling, where (though chiefly on Tonglo Mountain, 10,000 feet, on the Nipâl frontier of Sikhim, and some thirty miles from Darjeeling) he has collected many good things in a very short time. Of novelties, a fine new true Bullfinch (*Pyrhula erythaca*, nobis), being the fourth which the Himalaya has yielded. Size of *P. nipalensis*, with equally furcate tail; pectoral region bright red; all the upper parts, to white rump-band, pure ashy, like the back of male *P. vulgaris*,—a black ring, set off with

white, encircling the belly, as in *P. erythrocephala*; throat and fore neck grey, whitish towards the chin; the abdominal region paler grey, and the lower tail-coverts pure white. Tail as in *P. nipalensis*. A broad brownish-grey band ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch broad) tipping the greater wing-coverts. A new *Propasser* I call *P. frontalis*. It is most like *P. rhodopepla*, but has a smaller bill and longer tail. Feathers of forehead, supercilia, and throat elongated and narrow, and glistening rosy, with the centres of a vinaceous white; the broad frontal band almost whitish. The female also is very different from the female of the other species. There are other good things in his collections.”

Mr. Gätke writing from Heligoland (August 12th) says:—“The harvest of this spring does not furnish so interesting a list as I formerly communicated to you; nevertheless not many collectors of our latitude might be able to match even that. I obtained here, April 29th, a very fine old male of *Emberiza cirrus*; May 7th, quite as fine a specimen of *Totanus stagnatilis*; May 16th, a *Strix scops*,—these three species being new to Heligoland. Further, May 16th, also a very fine old male *Emb. cæsia*; and on the 28th of the same month, a fine *Emb. melanocephala*, old male.”

“A fine adult male of the Dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*) was killed at Tringhoe, in a corn-field, on the 14th inst., by one of Earl Brownlow’s keepers. It is now, through the kindness of a friend, in my possession. I regret to say that it got terribly fly-blown before it came into my hands, and I fear it will be scarcely fit for stuffing. I am not aware that the occurrence of this bird has been previously recorded in Buckinghamshire. There is, however, some bleak down-country in the vicinity of Tringhoe not at all uncongenial to its habits.

“H. HARPUR CREWE.”

“The Rectory, Drayton Beauchamp, Tring, Aug. 23, 1862.”

“Since my last letter, announcing the occurrence of the Dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*) at Tringhoe, Bucks, I have gleaned

some additional interesting particulars. On August 14th the keeper was out with his gun in a fallow-field, when he heard a low whistle, which for some weeks previous he had heard near his cottage in the evening. Presently two birds got up and came (to use his own words) straight towards him, like lightning. He fired, and both birds fell. He picked up one, an adult male, which came into my possession. The female dropped in a hollow, and he could not find it. It was afterwards picked up by some children, in whose hands the keeper saw it; but it had been so pulled about that it was fit for nothing, and it was finally plucked, cooked, and eaten by their mother. It may be interesting to some of your readers to hear that two specimens of the Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza cirrus*) were caught in a net by a friend of mine, last winter, at Pitstone, Bucks, the adjoining parish to Tringhoe: one of them unfortunately got thrown away, as my friend did not know what it was; but the other is in my possession. I have little doubt that this bird breeds in the neighbourhood, as in May 1861 I saw a fine adult male in the parish of Albury, which is adjacent to both Pitstone and Tringhoe.

“H. HARPUR CREWE.”

“The Rectory, Drayton Beauchamp, Tring, Sept. 9, 1862.”

With great regret we have to record a fresh addition to the already long list of martyrs to the cause of science—that of a naturalist whose explorations have been several times noticed in these pages. Sir R. Schomburgk sends the following notice to the ‘*Athenæum*,’ April 31st:—“Information has just been received at Bangkok of the death of M. Mouhot de Montbeliard, a French traveller and naturalist, who fell a victim to the jungle fever in November last, at the confines of Tonquin. M. Mouhot arrived in Bangkok in 1858, encouraged in his travels by some lovers of natural history in England, and accounts of the new discoveries which he has made have been frequently read before the Zoological Society in London. He was a fair draughtsman; and as his collections have been taken care of by the Siamese authorities where he died, and are now daily expected in Bangkok, under the charge of his servants, it is to be hoped that his manuscripts and drawings are likewise safe. In his personal

manners M. Mouhot was most amiable and unassuming. In him, the science of natural history has lost a worthy disciple."

To this we may add that, as we are informed by Mr. S. Stevens, his agent in London, M. Henri Mouhot died at Muang Luang Prabong, the capital city of Eastern Lao, on the 18th of November last year. Notices of some of M. Mouhot's extensive collections in mammalogy and herpetology will be found in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for 1860 and 1861, by Dr. J. E. Gray and Dr. Günther.

Mr. Gould is engaged in preparing for publication the two first numbers of a new and most remarkable addition to his magnificent series of ornithological works. On this occasion, instead of going to America or Australia to select objects for his pencil, he has chosen the more familiar subjects of the "Birds of Great Britain." It may be added that Mr. Gould has devoted more than usual care and attention to the production of this work. The accurate and characteristic portraits of our feathered favourites which have thus resulted will, we are sure, render this the most popular and the most successful of all Mr. Gould's scientific undertakings.

Major R. C. Tytler, whose name is familiar to many of our readers as that of an energetic worker in Indian ornithology, has lately been appointed to the chief command at Port Blair, the capital of the new settlement in the Andaman Islands. Major Tytler, as we learn from Mr. Blyth, has already procured a fine new Tree-crow (*Dendrocitta*), of which he was forwarding specimens, with other novelties, to the Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta.
